

1-3-1985

## UA12/2/1 Magazine

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### Recommended Citation

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Going it alone  
— together  
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Herald  
*Magazine*

Jan. 31, 1985

# Herald Magazine

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## 3

*On the cover:* Five-year-old Katie Mason gives her father, Bob, a goodnight hug after he read her a bedtime story. Eight months after a divorce in February 1983, Bob began learning to adjust to something he never thought he would do alone — raise his own child.

Story by ANGELA STRUCK  
Photos by CINDY PINKSTON

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From pickled mango to Egyptian movie musicals, there's more to Time Out Deli than the foreign phone accent and spicy sandwich most students have come to expect.

Story by VICTORIA P. MALMER  
Photos by KEVIN EANS

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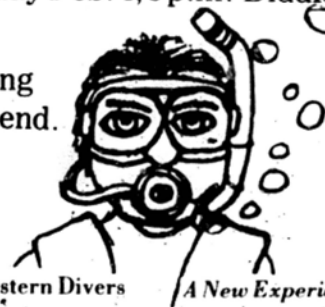
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Story by ANGELA STRUCK  
Photos by CINDY PINKSTON

# Going it alone — together



While eating "vegpittles," Katie Mason tells her father, Bob, about her day.

top. Bob watches Katie play in the snow on the way to school, above.

Both are students.  
They depend on each other.  
They share a home and meals.  
But the difference in their lives is evident at the supper table.

The small round table is snuggled into the corner of the trailer's tiny kitchen. Gray text books sit beside yellow cans of Play-Doh.

Bob Mason dishes carrots onto his 5-year-old daughter's plate.

"You know what?" Katie asks.

"What?"

"Carrots and squash are called veg-pittles," Bob says. "But some people call them vegetables."

"Vegpittles?"

"Yep."

"Yeah. Some people call them veg-pittles," Bob says. "But some people call them vegetables."

Bob is patient with his daughter. And with patience he has weathered a divorce and taken a child into his sole care.

Turmoil goes along with being a single parent, especially when a man who has spent five years in the Navy suddenly receives custody of a little girl still in diapers.

But the seas have calmed after three years.

Bob, 31, will receive his master's degree in community/agency counseling in May. He graduated from Western in 1975 with a bachelor's degree in business administration and is now a graduate assistant working 15 to 20 hours a week in counselor education.

In 1976, Bob enlisted in the Navy because he wanted to travel.

"I'd been raised in Russellville and Bowling Green," he said. "I was scared to settle down."

He married in December 1977 and left the Navy in 1981 after working as a supply corps officer on an ammunition ship for two and a half years. He and his wife separated the same year.

Their divorce was final in February 1983, and Katie came to live with Bob

eight months later. Soon after that, Bob decided to go back to school.

Bob received custody of Katie because at the time he was better able to take care of her than his ex-wife was, but he wasn't without doubts.

Being a single father isn't common, and society isn't always prepared to meet his needs, Bob said.

"Men are never raised to believe they're going to do this type of thing — cooking and washing," he said. "I had to learn all that on my own."

Bob said some people think it's cute when they see a man doing the housework, but he sees "nothing cute about it." If he doesn't do these things, no one else will, he said.

Establishing a routine was the hardest part of becoming a single parent, Bob said. But he believes it is a necessary part. "It kind of sets things up when you don't have to do it new every time."

Bob and Katie's routine begins every

morning at about 6:30 when Bob wakes up and gets ready for work. He gets Katie up about 7 and fixes breakfast while she gets dressed.

He drops her off between 8 and 8:30 a.m. at Discovery Learning Center on High Street, where she goes to kindergarten.

Then Bob is off to his job in counselor education. His 12 hours of classes meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Sometimes he goes to the library before he picks Katie up at about 5 p.m.

At the center, Katie sits with her back to the door, her eyes fixed on a computer. Her brown hair falls over her shoulders, and she wears red jeans and a gray sweat-shirt, spotted with blue, green and red designs. Giggling with the little boy next to her, she draws green lines on the screen. Her brown eyes light up with the screen.

Her father, a thin man with light

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# Going it alone



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brown hair and a mustache, looks at her and his pale blue eyes light up behind wire-rimmed glasses. She likes computers, he says.

She gets a print-out of her creation, and it's time to put on her coat and leave for their home in Highland Trailer Park off Nashville Road.

Katie is quiet at first, but not reserved. She sits in the car with two fingers in her mouth.

"Did you guys play with the computer all day?" Bob asks.

"Nope."

"What else did you do today?"

"We made a book today," Katie says. She opens a green paper pouch and shows him pictures of animals that she colored and cut out.

They talk about school until they get home. Inside the trailer, a guitar leans against a beige and brown love seat. A stereo and television stand against one wall.

A picture of a smiling Katie in a blue dress and white smock hangs on the wall next to the television. A Naval Officer Candidate School certificate of completion sits next to a picture of the ship Bob traveled on in the Navy.

"My daddy was there when I was a little, little baby," Katie says.

**B**ob whistles while he fixes hot dogs, carrots, squash and peas. Katie colors in front of the television.

The nights are usually the same, Bob says. "I think a little routine is good for kids — probably for adults, too."

Some variety is good, though. Once a week they go out to eat, usually on Fridays. Of course Katie wants to go out every night, but they couldn't afford that, Bob says.

But Katie helps with meals sometimes.

"I can cook eggs; I can cook a cheese sandwich; I can cook lots of things," she says.

After supper, a friend or Bob's brother, Tom, sometimes visit and watches a movie or basketball game on television.

Before bedtime, Katie takes a bath.

And then brush my teeth, and Daddy reads me a book, but he didn't read one last night," Katie says.

"Baloney! I read you three."

"Nu-uhh. I'm not kidding. I'm really not, Dad. I'm not kidding."

When they have time together, they go to Western basketball games with friends. Katie likes the games, "or at least the coke and popcorn," Bob says. They go

to the park on weekends when the weather is nice.

Once a week they go to the store. "She pushes, and I hold onto the cart so we don't kill anybody," Bob says. "If I can go by myself, I do."

The television is tuned to Star Trek, one of Katie's favorite programs. She hums the theme as she sits down to eat.

Katie is in bed by 8:30 p.m., and Bob has time to himself. Taking care of Katie hasn't affected his grades. When she's in bed, he can study, read, play his guitar or watch television. Bob is strict about bedtime; it's part of the routine.

**S**ingle parents, because of their responsibility and busy schedules, are easily isolated. But Bob said he is thankful for the support from friends and family. Being around other people is also important to Katie.

"One person can't give all the support at one time to anybody," Bob said. Bob and Katie visit his parents in Russellville about every other week.

Elizabeth Mason, Bob's mother, was skeptical when Bob received custody of Katie.

"I could be glad about it, but I wondered how he would take care of her," she said. Bob is the oldest of her three sons and has never had even a little sister to take care of. But she has seen Bob become more responsible and mature.

"I think they have a good relationship," she said. "Katie loves her dad, and Bob — he's done better than I ever thought he could do with a child."

Bob wasn't sure how he was going to take care of Katie at first either.

"I was scared, and I had a lot of resentment to work through, too," He said he thought to himself, "Why does this have to happen to me? Why do I have to change my life and lifestyle?"

"I'd never spent more than three hours by myself with her," he said. "I didn't know her, and she didn't know me."

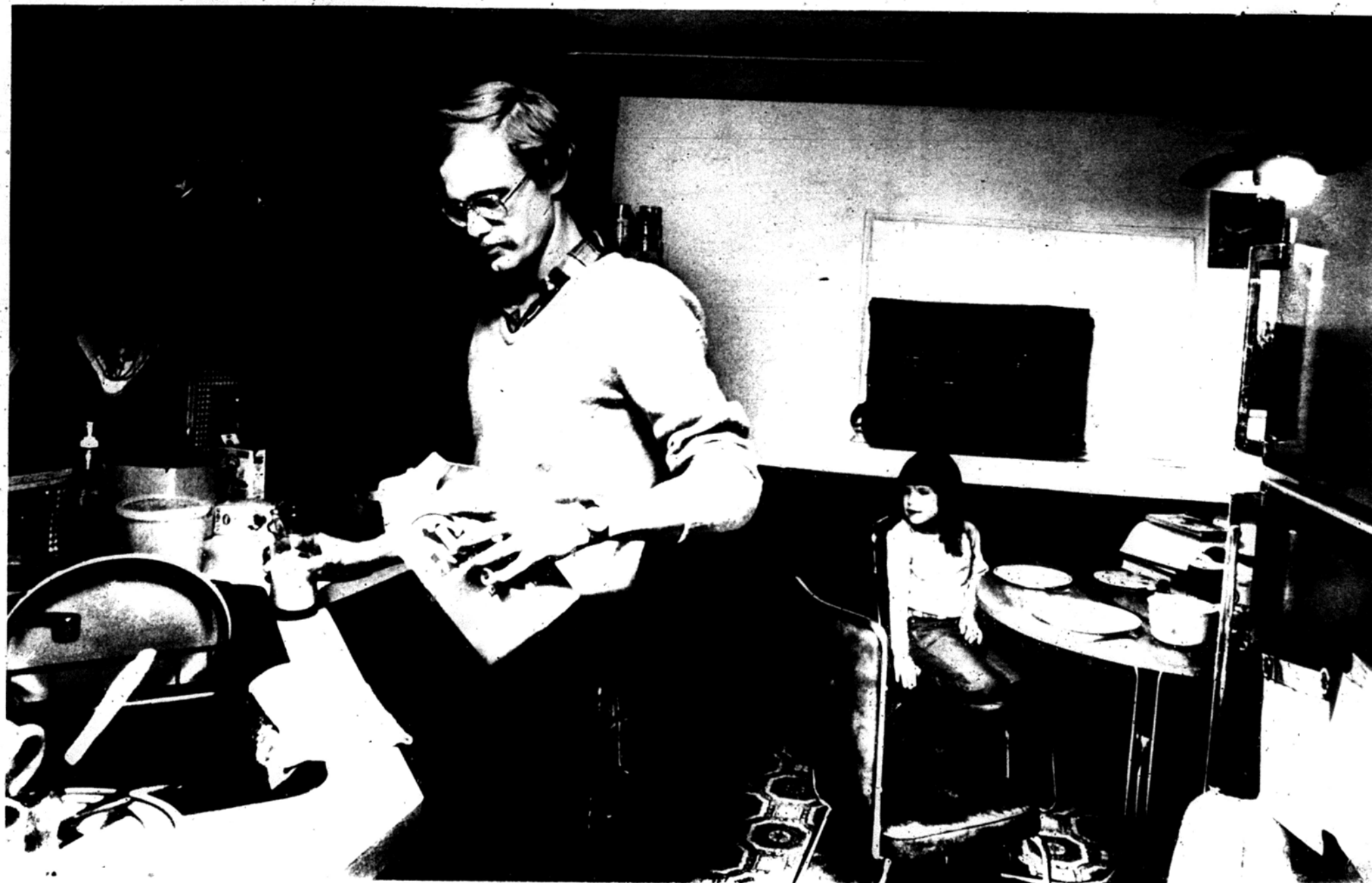
He was scared of the responsibility.

"You're making all these decisions that affect someone else's life," he said. "It's there every minute — you can't just throw your hands up."

"The first year was the hardest," he said. But "I think I did a good job."

A single parent makes many sacrifices. Bob said he's given up "a certain degree of freedom and flexibility, but it's all outweighed by what I've gained, a feeling of greater self-confidence — I can handle about any situation."

And Bob thinks Katie has handled the situation well. He said his aunts, friends and her grandmother are enough women



in Katie's life, and she hasn't suffered without a mother.

Mrs. Mason agrees. "She seems pretty well adjusted for a child without a mother. The older she gets the more she questions why she (her mother) isn't there, but I don't think it bothers her." She said Bob is open with Katie about her mother.

**K**atie's mother lives in Virginia, so they don't see each other much. But she did see her at Christmas for three weeks, which was the longest Katie and Bob had been separated since they started living together.

"After two weeks I began to feel really strange," Bob said. "I began to think things need to get back to normal."

Bob receives no financial support from Katie's mother or his parents. His job helps pay for school, he said, and it's convenient because it's on campus. But he couldn't afford school without a GI Bill, which gives educational benefits to people who have served in the military.

When he finishes school, he wants to work in Bowling Green. He's traveled a lot and is ready to settle down, near his parents if he can. He appreciates the support and sense of family he and Katie receive from them. They sometimes watch Katie when Bob goes out.

Dating is different with a child around,

Bob said. But after a year and a half, he was comfortable with his relationship with his daughter and ready to work on other relationships.

"I'd grown as much as I could grow," he said. "I had to branch out."

He doesn't get to go out on his own very often, however. That can be a problem, he said, because he doesn't want to exclude Katie.

"The person that's interested in you has to be interested in your kid, too," he said. "I couldn't date someone who wasn't interested in my kid." He said he wants to go out with someone who understands that he needs to work around his child.

"A goal I have is to get remarried," Bob said. "I don't know when that will be." But he said he won't marry to find a substitute for Katie's mother; he'll marry to find a companion for himself.

He's working to make life better for himself and his child. "No matter what kind of trick life plays, there's always some way you can improve it," he said.

And Katie helps to make life easier. "She's real outgoing. She can reach out to people and be real comfortable," he said.

Bob took the time to adjust to his new way of life and establish a routine. Now he is comfortable rearing a daughter on his own.

"I identify myself now as a single father," he said. "And that's an important identity."

Katie laughs with her father while playing a game, far left. Before supper, Bob pours Katie a glass of milk, left. Katie curls up next to her dad for a bedtime story, below. Before going to school, Bob takes a moment to play his guitar while Katie listens quietly, bottom.





Ronnie Watt, 29, and his daughters, Tammy, 8, and Kimberly, 4, decide what to order. Watt said they visit the deli about once a week.

## "Time Out Deli, May I help you"

Story by VICTORIA P. MALMER  
Photos by KEVIN EANS

As Time Out Deli's glass doors swing open, a spicy, meaty smell carried on a warm blast of air hits full-force.

The owner, Mike Mubarak, shouts a greeting, inviting customers in from the cold and motioning to colorful, hand-lettered signs that tout the sandwiches he sells.

Behind the counter, a pay phone rings. "Time Out Deli may I help you," Mike answers in a thick Middle-Eastern accent. "Mayonnaise or mustard," he says, scribbling the order on a sack and handing it to his cook, Richard Stout.

Within half an hour, the sandwich is picked up by a delivery girl, and money and meal are exchanged. But there's more to Time Out Deli than the foreign accent and spicy sandwich most students have come to expect.

Inside the deli, six tables covered in red checkered oilcloth are arranged on

threadbare red carpet. Along the back wall, refrigerator cases are filled with cheesecake and homemade baklava—a flaky pastry filled with walnuts, cinnamon, and honey.

Another case holds square red cans of Polish ham, yellow plastic tubs of sliced roast beef, ham and provolone cheese and stacks of Greek pita, or pocket bread.

The coldcases create a serving counter, lined with gallon jars of pickles, peppers, black olives, pickled mango, pancake-sized grape leaves and cans of fava beans, eggplant dip and mango juice.

Beer mirrors and neon signs clutter the walls. A Western crest, made of plaster of paris, decorates one wall.

"We really support Western, the Lady Toppers, all the sports," Mike said. "We have red truck, red carpet, red tablecloths, red chairs because, you know, Big Red and all, it's the school's colors."

"All of campus is our customers." Of the 400 to 500 sandwiches made each day, about 40 percent are eaten by



Time Out's co-owner Mike Mubarak and his wife, Irene, hold their two

children, Said, 2, and Kamil, 9 months, at the deli.

Western students. "We do about \$1,000 in sales a day," he said. "That's pretty good I guess."

A large part of that business is foreign students from Western, who often gather there at night to watch television and listen to music.

On the left near the door, the trills, beeps and pings from pinball and video games compete with a Lady Toppers game on television and "I Can't Get No Satis-

faction" booming from a stereo.

Just beyond the games, two couches and end tables are arranged in front of the TV set, creating a makeshift living room where the store's owners and a group of foreign students often relax.

A fuzz-coated plastic tiger looks down from atop the stereo, and the palm-sized plaster painted faces of two swarthy arabs scowl from the wall.

Mike and his brother and co-owner,





Mike Mubarak enjoys a game of chess with Mahfud Musbah of Libya, a regular at Time Out, left. Mike has several videotapes from India, Egypt and Jerusalem that he plays to make foreign students feel more at home, below.



Mark, are originally from Ramallah, a city five miles from Jerusalem, but they've been in America 16 years.

"They (customers) come from all over — Saudi Arabia, Spain, all over Europe — they support us. If it wasn't for Western, we probably wouldn't have made it in this town," Mike said.

"They come in, they buy pita. They come in, eat gyros and talk," he said, piling meat on a dark roll.

He wiped a red-checked tablecloth with his hand as he sat down to talk. "I know the people who come here," he said. "I ask them 'What are you doin' today?' and they tell me. It keeps people comin' back."

One student who comes back is Mahfud Musbah, 28, from Libya, who's been in America five years. He has no relatives in the United States — "only friends here."

Musbah graduated from Western in December with a degree in electrical engineering, but he takes a few classes part-time now.

He comes to Time Out two or three times a week to eat the gyro (pronounced "year-oh") — or "shawarma" as they call it in his country. A gyro is thin slices of spicy, garlicky beef arranged in pita bread with chopped onion, tomato and cucumber sour cream.

Most of the time, Musbah said, he cooks for himself in his apartment because American cooking is too greasy, and a lot of it tastes the same.

"Your food in this country is OK, but you have one hamburger, that's enough for awhile. I get tired of it," he said, sitting on the couch watching an Egyptian musical on a video cassette recorder.

"Some of my friends come here on the weekends. We watch movies and eat. Even sometimes when I don't eat, I come here too. We watch Arabic movies with Mike. Mike's our friend."

"They make very good business here," Musbah said. "The restaurant business here, it is very good. It makes good money, you know?"

Robert Leidelmeijer is another student far from home who frequents Time Out. The senior foreign language major from the Netherlands says he comes in about twice a week.

"We're very ethnic in Holland," he said. "And this is a very ethnic place. Mike and I — we communicate. This place is different. I like it here."

But foreign students aren't the only ones who appreciate the menu. John Metzger, humanities graduate student from Franklin, appreciates Time Out's foreign flavor.

"This place has an international appeal," Metzger said. "Where else in Bowling Green can you go for authentic international foods like they have here? Sure, you can get Chinese, but that's it. This is the place," he said, sitting down to talk with Mike and Stout.

He especially likes the falafel, a sort-of

spicy, vegetable sausage made from ground chickpeas, parsley and garlic, deep-fried and served in a pita pocket.

"It's made in Jerusalem — I guess you could say it's unique to the Time Out Deli," Metzger said. "I'm a strict vegetarian, so I really like it. My friend Richard — he's somewhat of an authority on foods. So he steers people more toward healthy foods."

"I'm sure Western students like the meat and cheese — but I just can't get enough of that falafel."

The Time Out concept seems to be popular. So far, 31 Time Outs exist nationwide, most owned and run by members of Mike's family.

"We've got a big family," Mike said, smiling. "My father had nine sisters, so there are plenty of us."

The Bowling Green Time Out has been here two and a half years. It has a staff of 16 employees, two of whom are Western students.

There is one Time Out in California, one in Atlanta, 16 in Knoxville, one in Lexington, and some scattered through Greenville and Morristown, Tenn.

"It's all family owned," Mike said. "We have all these family secrets that we've carried with us for years — certain things that go into our sandwiches that no

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While taking an order over the phone, delivery person Dawn DeSimone, a freshman from Long

Island, N.Y., scribbles down information on the bag the sandwich will go out in.

# "TimeOutDeli"

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one can duplicate."

Time Out even has its own bread factory in Knoxville to make hoagie buns unlike any others.

Mike, or Murad as he is called in Jerusalem, has been in the restaurant business since he arrived in this country 16 years ago. His brother, who was on vacation, has the given name Marwan.

"Our English first names are like nicknames," Mike said. "I still think of myself by that name." He reads, writes and speaks Hebrew, English and Arabic.

"And I practice every chance I can so I won't forget it. It is part of the heritage."

Mike attended the Culinary Institute of America, which is to restaurateurs what Harvard Law School is to attorneys, and then worked in "the finest restaurants" in Washington, D.C.

"Then I went to work for my uncle in his deli, the first Time Out, in Knoxville," he said. "My uncle, he taught me all he knew about the business."

Mark is now teaching his wife, Annette, the business. But Mike's wife, Irene, is forbidden by her father-in-law, Said, from working there. Mike's father believes her job is keeping her husband company at the restaurant and taking care of their children, Said, 2, and Kamil, 9 months.

**N**ext to the cash register are the usual containers of straws and napkins. But guarding the napkin holder are two tiny, carved wooden camels.

They remind Mike of his specialty, the Camel Ryder, sliced ham and salami, cheese, tomato, onion and green peppers in a pita-bread pocket.

"That's my creation. I thought of it, I made it and this is the only Time Out Deli that serves it," Mike said proudly.

"Most of the people from my country, they are very successful in this country.

Most of my relatives — they make good money in America. We all do well in America."

Once a year, Mike said, everyone from Ramallah who lives in America gathers for a convention in a different city. "Everybody comes, and we talk and find out what everybody does lately."

Stout, Time Out's 32-year-old cook, went to Western several years ago and has worked for Mark and Mike since Time Out opened. He believes the deli's attraction is the exotic foods it stocks.

"Mike has Middle Eastern foods, and if someone asks for something special, Mike'll try to stock it. It makes them (the foreign students) feel more at home," Stout said.

Stout used to deliver for the deli until an accident two years ago. When he was taking an order out, someone ran a stop sign at 12th and Kentucky streets. The speeding car hit Stout's delivery vehicle and broke his neck.

Stout was in a halo neck brace "a long, long time," and was away from Time Out 16 months. He has been back at work four months but still tilts his head cautiously when answering the pay phone.

Dawn DeSimone, one of Time Out's delivery girls, said Time Out's appeal is that it's a "home away from home" for students.

"Mark and Mike are easy to talk to," the sophomore from Long Island, N.Y., said. "People can come in — and they get hooked on it, you know? And they come back and watch TV, sittin' on the couches."

"The couches are a nice touch, I think. It's comfortable here, you know?" she said in a New York street-smart accent.

"Mike's got a VCR, he gets MTV, and they watch movies all the time, especially at night," DeSimone said.

Mike said he has more than 500 video tapes, which he and regular customers



Lunch and television give employees from Holley Carburetor, across the street from the deli, a relaxing break from work.

sometimes watch when they come in to eat. A lot of his collection consists of movies and musicals from India, Egypt and Jerusalem.

Musbah was watching "The Dreams of the Young Men," the translated title of a Middle Eastern movie starring Faaried Al Etrch. He said the film is critical of government. "Like your 'Sanford and Son' is a criticism of prejudice, it's funny."

**M**ike then played a video tape of a relative's wedding. Laura Hunt, another delivery girl, covered her ears when she heard the Arabic music as she tried to study between delivery runs. She moaned, rolled her eyes and imitated the sound of the foreign music.

Hunt, a sophomore from Hendersonville, Tenn. said delivering is a good job most of the time. "Most people are really nice," she said.

"But sometimes when I go over to the Valley, they're in such a hurry. They just take the bag from me and go. They don't stop to say 'thank you' most times. I just wish people would think to stop and smile and say 'thank you.' It makes a big difference. It makes the job a lot easier."

Mike's third delivery person, Joe Lozano, 25, said he hitchhiked here eight months ago from San Antonio, Texas.

"I hitched for a long time, and then when I got to Bowling Green, my little voice inside me — you know about little voices? — anyway, the voice said 'Stay here, this is a good place.' So I stayed. And I found this job two days later."

Mark and Mike are "good people," Lozano said in a light Spanish accent. "They treat me good and I treat them right, too."

Mike said his eat-in and carry-out business lately has been slowed by the wintry weather. "Seems like most of the Western students call in because of the cold weather."

But despite the icy winter, Mike isn't worried about business.

"If it weren't for us, I don't know what the campus would do," Mike said. "There are plenty of places that deliver pizza, but we're the only place that delivers these kinds of sandwiches. All night the phone rings off the wall."

Students' business is important to him for several reasons.

"It's not just the money. After you've done something for a long time, it becomes a matter of pride. Every sandwich I make has to be the best I can make. It has to have a lot of meat, and it has to be the best, or I feel guilty," Mike said.

His wife, Irene, believes the homey atmosphere Mike has created will keep customers coming back.

"My husband has a specialty of remembering every customer and remembering what they like and what they order," she said. "People remember him and they like knowing he remembers them."

And Mike plans for Time Out to be around for a long time.

"We've got a 10-year lease," Mike said. "I know we'll be here at least 10 more years. We'll be here a long, long time." ■

## This Week's Special



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